

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7120

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PDIP, SU, PDEV, EAID
SUBJ: JOURNEY TO SOUTHERN KORDOFAN

1. I ACCOMPANIED AID MISSION DIRECTOR ON BRIEF VISIT TO KADUGLI (CAPITAL OF SOUTHERN KORDOFAN PROVINCE) AND ABYEI (HOMETOWN OF FRANCIS DENG AND LOCATION OF NEW AID-FINANCED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT) APRIL 15-16, 1978.

2. WE LEFT KHARTOUM MID-MORNING APRIL 15 TRAVELLING IN CHARTERED, SINGLE ENGINE, SWISS-DESIGNED, FIVE PASSENGER, STOL AIRCRAFT. WE STOPPED FOR REFUELING AT EL OBEID AND THEN PROCEEDED TO KADUGLI. KADUGLI AIR FACILITY CONSISTS OF A GRAVEL STRIP HACKED OUT OF THE SCRUB AND A LITTLE SHELTER FROM THE SUN MADE OF BRANCHES AND DRY TWIGS. THAT IS ALL. NOT EVEN A WINDSOCK.

3. WE WERE MET BY THE PROVINCIAL COMMISSIONER WHO DROVE ME INTO TOWN IN HIS OFFICIAL MERCEDES. HE IS A MOST INTELLIGENT AND PERCEPTIVE OFFICIAL. HE WAS AN ARMY OFFICER, ONE OF PRESIDENT NIMEIRI'S ORIGINAL SUPPORTERS, WHO HAS TWICE HELD CABINET POSTS. HE IS FROM SOUTH KORDOFAN AND WAS ASKED TO TAKE OVER THE COMMISSIONERSHIP OF THIS PROVINCE BESET WITH THE PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT. I NOTICED THAT THE COMMISSIONER LOOKED RATHER POORLY. IT DEVELOPED THAT HE WAS UNDERGOING

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A RAGING RECURRENT ATTACK OF MALARIA. DESPITE THIS, HE INSISTED ON SPENDING SOME TIME WITH US THAT AFTERNOON AND JOINED IN OUR EVENING CONVERSATIONS.

4. KADUGLI IS AN ATTRACTIVELY LOCATED TOWN, SURROUNDED BY HILLS OF THE NUBA MOUNTAINS COVERED WITH CONSIDERABLE VEGETATION. IT IS HOWEVER HOT, HOT, HOT IN APRIL ON THE EVE OF THE RAINY

SEASON. WE WERE QUARTERED IN THE BUILDINGS ERECTED FOR PRESIDENT NIMEIRI WHEN HE PRESIDED OVER THE INDEPENDENCE DAY CEREMONIES HELD THERE IN JANUARY 1977. THEY HAD SUFFERED FROM THE HARSH ENVIRONMENT. THERE WAS ELECTRICITY THROUGHOUT OUR STAY AND INTERMITTENT WATER. THE AIR CONDITIONER DID NOT WORK AND THE ONE FAN AVAILABLE DID LITTLE TO MAKE OUR BEDROOM SLEEPABLE.

5. THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER AND THE SPECIALIZED ASSISTANT COMMISSIONERS MET WITH US AND WE TOURED THE TOWN, VISITING SEVERAL SCHOOLS. SOME OF THESE SCHOOLS WERE BUILT AND ARE BEING MAINTAINED BY THE PARENTS OF THE STUDENTS WHILE THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDES TEACHING STAFF. WE WERE ALSO SHOWN THE PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OFFICE. THE OFFICIALS COMPLAINED OF INADEQUATE WORKING SPACE. THEY SAID A NUMBER OF SENIOR EDUCATION PERSONNEL HAD BEEN ASSIGNED TO THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL BY KHARTOUM. WHEN THESE LATTER ARRIVED IN KADUGLI THEY DISCOVERED THAT THERE WAS NO OFFICE SPACE, TRANSPORTATION, OR HOUSING AVAILABLE. THEY QUICKLY RETURNED TO KHARTOUM WHERE THEY ALLEGEDLY CONTINUE TO DRAW THEIR SALARIES.

6. OUR EVENING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE OFFICIAL GROUP BROUGHT OUT THE FACT THAT ALL PUBLIC FUNCTIONS ARE BEING CARRIED OUT AT A LEVEL FAR, FAR BELOW THE NEEDS OF THE PROVINCE. THERE IS NOWHERE NEAR ENOUGH BUDGET AVAILABLE AND THE SUPPLY OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUCH BASIC COMMODITIES AS FUEL, MEDICINE, AND EVEN TEXTBOOKS, IS INADEQUATE AND INTERMITTENT. DESPITE THESE STRINGENCIES, MOST OF THE OFFICIALS WE TALKED TO WERE SINCERE AND DEDICATED. THEY ARE MAKING AVAILABLE, FROM THEIR SCANTY RESOURCES, TRACTORS, PLOWS, SEED AND FUEL FOR THE ABYEI COMPREHENSIVE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT. THE COMMISSIONER CONFIDED TO ME THAT HE WOULD MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT BY THE INCREASE IN THE PRODUCTION OF MILLET IN ABYEI.

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7. WE TOOK OFF EARLY NEXT MORNING FOR ABYEI, STOPPING AT THE CHEVRON AIRSTRIP AT BENTIU TO TAKE ON FUEL. WHAT WAS TO HAVE BEEN A ONE HOUR FLIGHT FROM BENTIU TO ABYEI TURNED OUT TO BE ONE OF NEARLY THREE HOURS' DURATION. WE WERE BLOWN OFF COURSE BY NORTHERLY WINDS. THERE ARE NO NAVIGATION AIDS IN THE AREA. THE COUNTRY IS FEATURELESS, CROSSED BY CONFUSING EMPTY WATER COURSES AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, AND EXTREMELY FORBIDDING. IF WHAT WE FLEW OVER IS NUMBERED AMONG THE 200 MILLION ACRES SUITABLE FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, I WOULDN'T GIVE A NICKEL AN ACRE FOR IT. NOR DO I RECOMMEND FLYING ENDLESSLY OVER IT WITH ONE EYE ANXIOUSLY ON THE FUEL GAUGE.

8. WE FINALLY SIGHTED ABYEI AND LANDED. ABYEI IS REALLY ENDSVILLE. IT MAKES DONGOLA LOOK LIKE SPRING VALLEY. BUT THE PEOPLE COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE FRIENDLY. A LARGE CROWD TURNED OUT: MOST OF THE TOWNSPEOPLE, CIVILIAN AND MILITARY OFFICIALS, AND THE SENIOR DINKA CHIEFS (MODESTLY ATTIRED IN ARAB GALLABIYAHS FOR THE OCCASION). AFTER A SHORT FORMAL WELCOMING CEREMONY, WE WERE TAKEN ON A TOUR OF THE TOWN.

9. WE THEN VISITED THE LOCAL HEALTH CENTER. I ASKED THE YOUNG DOCTOR IN CHARGE (A NORTHERNER) ABOUT HIS MAJOR PROBLEMS AND GOT RATHER DUSTY ANSWERS. THE CONVERSATION

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WAS TAKEN OVER BY THE SENIOR MEDICAL ASSISTANT (A SOUTHERNER) WHO GAVE AN EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION. THEIR MAJOR DISEASES ARE MALARIA AND INFANT DIARRHEA. THEIR MAJOR PROBLEM, A CHRONIC SHORTAGE OF MEDICINES. AS WE LEFT THE CENTER, THE DOCTOR APOLOGIZED TO ME FOR NOT HAVING BEEN MORE FORTHCOMING. HE GAVE THE RECENTLY TERMINATED DOCTORS' STRIKE AS HIS REASON.

10. WE THEN HAD LUNCH (ABOUT TWENTY DIFFERENT DISHES OF FLY-COVERED FOOD WITH EVERYONE DIPPING INTO THEM AT RANDOM WITH HIS OWN SPOON OR PIECE OF BREAD) AND DISCUSSIONS WITH THE YOUNG AMERICANS LIVING IN ABYEI WORKING ON THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT. THEY ARE FACED WITH CONSIDERABLE

DIFFICULTIES-THEY STILL HAVE NO PERMANENT HOUSING, FOR EXAMPLE, AND THERE IS NO POSTAL SERVICE WHATSOEVER, TO MENTION JUST TWO. THEIR MORALE IS QUITE HIGH, HOWEVER, AND THE TOWNSPEOPLE CHERISH THEIR PRESENCE AS AN INDICATION THAT SOMEBODY FINALLY CARES.

11. DURING THE RAINY SEASON THERE IS RECURRENT FEUDING BETWEEN THE DINKA AND ARAB-SPEAKING NOMADS OVER GRAZING AND ACCESS RIGHTS FOR THEIR CATTLE. THIS YEAR THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPOSITIONING TROOPS IN ABEYEI TO ACT AS A DETERRENT. WE SAW QUITE A FEW OF THEM, LIVING UNDER CANVAS.

12. OUR TRIP HOME FROM ABEYEI, VIA BENTIU AND KADUGLI, WAS, THANK GOD, WITHOUT INCIDENT.

13. THIS TRIP, WHILE NOT EXACTLY DEPRESSING, WAS EXTREMELY SOBERING. SUDAN'S BRIGHT PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE REMAIN. THE SUDANESE ARE DEDICATED IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL RPT ALL OF THEIR PEOPLE. BUT THE ROAD FROM HERE TO THERE IS SO LONG AND SO FRAUGHT WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DIFFICULTY. THERE IS AN APPALLING SCARCITY OF RESOURCES AT EVERY LEVEL. THE MASSIVE FOREIGN INVESTMENT PROJECTS IN THIS COUNTRY, UNTIL THEY REACH PAYOFF, ARE PRIORITY CONSUMERS OF THESE RESOURCES. EVEN OUR OWN AID PROJECTS, CAREFULLY DESIGNED TO HELP THE POOREST OF THE POOR, WILL HAVE TO COMPETE FOR GOODS AND SERVICES THE SUDANESE CAN ILL AFFORD TO SPARE.

14. THE EXPERIENCE OF THIS BRIEF TRIP IS HELPING ME SHARPEN MY THOUGHTS ABOUT WHAT WE MIGHT DO TO ALLEVIATE SOME OF THE PAIN AND DAMPEN DOWN SOME OF THE RISK TO STABILITY OF THIS STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT THE SUDAN IS PASSING THROUGH. I HOPE TO HAVE SOME IDEAS TO SHARE WITH THE DEPARTMENT IN THE DAYS AHEAD.
BERGUS

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